

Free to Be . . .

Category: Parenting

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As a single parent most my children's lives, my identity fixated on motherhood. I managed their successes, failure, moods and challenges. I was at the helm of our ship.

As they entered their teens, they described my steering as "stupid." So, I shifted from captain to astronomer, helping them navigate by reading the stars. Taking a backseat was uncomfortable, and I bit my tongue (a lot!), rather than elicit another battle. I surrounded them with trustworthy adults, recognizing the same advice uttered from a different adult became morsels of wisdom in their eyes. As an astronomer, I had subtle influence helping them notice signs that could lead away from entropy and towards marvelous constellations instead.

We survived the tumultuous teen years. My children are currently in their early twenties, and I'm no longer in the front or back seat. I am a viewer, sitting in a movie theatre watching their stories unfold. I may apprise friends (or therapists) with a personal review, but only if it doesn't reach my children. The time has come to respect them as authors of their lives. Now, they usually just text "I'm ok" or "too busy to chat." On occasion, they call wanting me to listen to their woes: desiring my presence but not my advice or approval. I've learned to nod my head, or say "hmmmm, that sounds tough (or good)," releasing my held breath with a quiet sigh. My mother said "parenting is a life sentence because you always worry about your children, no matter how old they are." We were either tough to raise, or my Mom's identity remained closely tied to motherhood. I hope I've grown by viewing my children as some of my best teachers. They helped me become a better version of myself. Now its time to let them know I like learning from them. I may not like all their choices, yet they are captains of their journey. Luckily, I'm witnessing decent, respectable young adults. The mountains and valleys are theirs to climb, not mine. As I watch, I see sparkling moments of amazement. When I least expect it, they support my emotions, surprise me with a thoughtful word or offer to assist in the home. It's my turn to breathe free, trust I've helped them build skills, and marvel at how much they are, and always have been, their own person. Now it's my turn to freely fly!

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